pollen to be pushed on to its own stigma, I am inclined to speculate a little further. It is, I think, well ascertained that very close interbreeding tends to produce sterility, at least amongst animals. Moreover, in plants, it has been ascertained that the male organs fail in fertility more readily than the female organs, both from hybridity and from other causes, and further, that they resume their fertility slower, when a hybrid is crossed in successive generations with either pure parent, than do the female organs. May we not then suppose, in the case of leguminous plants, after a long course of self-fertilization, that the pollen begins to fail, and then, and not till then, the plants are eagerly ready to receive pollen from some other variety? Can this be connected with the apparently short duration and constant succession of new varieties amongst our Peas, and, as is stated to be the case on the Continent, with Kidney Beans?

These speculations may be valueless; but I venture earnestly to request any of your correspondents who may have noticed any analogous facts connected with sudden and large variation in their seed-crops of any leguminous plants (including Sweet Peas), or any facts bearing on such plants having kept true for many consecutive generations when grown near each other, to have the kindness to take the trouble to communicate them to the 'Gardeners' Chronicle,' or to the following address, C. Darwin, Downe, Bromley, Kent.

LI.—*Description of a new species of Bird from Palestine.* By Philip Lutley Sclater, M.A., F.L.S.

Amydrus Tristramii.

Saturate purpureo-nitens, ventre obscuriore; alis caudaque obscure nigris viridi-nitente marginatis: alarum primariis omnibus clare ochracescenti-fulvis, nigricanti-fusco late terminatis, extimo quoque eodem colore extus partim limbato: rostro et pedibus nigris. ♀ mari similis, sed paulo minor, obscurior, et præcipue in capite et gutture fusca.

Long. tota maris 11·0, alæ 5·9, caudæ 4·5, rostri a rictu 1·4, tarsi 1·25.

Hab. in Terra Sancta.

A pair of this fine species, which belongs to the brilliant group of *Lamprotornithinæ*, or Glossy Starlings, was obtained by the Rev. H. B. Tristram in Palestine during the present spring, and I have called it after its discoverer. It forms a third of the small group to which Cabanis's term *Amydrus* is now restricted. It is rather larger than *Amydrus fulvipennis* (Sw.) of Western and Southern Africa; and the primaries are of a uniform pale buffy

fulvous, with the shafts black, instead of being lighter in the interior and edged with darker chestnut, as is the case in the latter species. From *Amydrus morio* of Abyssinia and Western Africa, the only other member of the group as now restricted, it is at once distinguishable by its smaller size and the paler colouring of the primaries.

Mr. Tristram shot these birds on the 30th of March last, at Mar-Saaba, in the valley of the Hebron. They had their nest in the rocks; but he was unable to reach it. The discovery is of much interest, as the bird belongs to a purely African group not hitherto met with in Palestine.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES.

General Report upon the Zoology of the several Pacific Railroad Routes. Part II. *Birds.* By Spencer F. Baird, Assistant Secretary, Smithsonian Institution; with the co-operation of John Cassin and George N. Lawrence. 1 vol. 4to, Washington, 1858.

In our notice of the first Part* of this important work, some account is given of the way in which the large mass of zoological *matériel* collected by the various expeditions sent out by the United States Government to investigate the most practicable railroad route from the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean, was proposed to be treated. The second Part, which has just issued from the press, serves to confirm our opinion as to the excellence of the method chosen, and the great value of the results thus likely to be obtained. The present volume (in which Prof. Baird, the general editor, has been ably assisted by Messrs. Cassin and Lawrence) contains a systematic account of the birds collected or observed by the parties organized under the direction of the War Department for exploring the different railroad routes; and, as in the volume on Mammals, by the insertion of the comparatively few species not noticed by these expeditions, it has been made a complete exposition of the present state of our knowledge of the birds of America north of Mexico. For, besides the specimens collected by the railroad surveys, the Smithsonian Institution has become the depository of collections from several other sources, forming altogether a series of 12,000 specimens illustrative of the ornithology of North America; so that the materials for a general Report of this kind were ample. And it must be allowed, we think, that good use has been made of them. Even those who object to what they may term the new-fangled system of arrangement—the excessive subdivision of the genera and multiplication of species, and the unnecessary changes of old-established and familiar appellations—must admit that the divisions are generally well defined, the distinctive characters of the species, such as they

* *Vide* Ann. Nat. Hist. ser. 3. vol. i. p. 369.